

Allison

WEEK OF September 9, 1940

ANNOUNCER: WPA HEADLINES OF THE WEEK! Good _____,
friends. This is another of YOUR personal programs.
A quarter hour devoted to news and information
concerning YOUR community.
Today's presentation is a brief sketch illustrating
the work done by the WPA in cases of emergency. As
we open the scene, we are introduced to the
Managing Editor of a newspaper by the name of Hicks.
As usual, something important is going on in (FADE)
his usually busy office.....

HICKS:

I'm the Managing Editor of an Independent newspaper published in a city just across the line from Jersey. Not very long ago, I called a member of the paper's Editorial staff into my office to reprimand him about his neglecting to write an editorial I was personally interested in. John Dale was an excellent reporter, loyal to the paper and its policy; but he had a mind (MUSIC SNEAKS IN) of his own and was not at all reluctant to express himself.

MUSIC:

SWELL BRIEFLY AND FADE FOR SCENE.

SOUND:

DOOR CLOSING.

DALE:

(COMING TO MIKE) Okay Boss! The fair-haired boy's right on tap. All you've got to do is.....

HICKS:

(INTERRUPTING HEATEDLY) None of your Front Page stuff, Dale!

DALE:

(SURPRISED) Well! (BREEZILY) But can I help it.... if I like the movies?

HICKS: You can help imitating the characters they palm off as reporters! This is a newspaper! Not a movie lot!

DALE: You took the words right out of my mouth. That's exactly what I was trying to say. (CHUCKLES) So what's fit to print today, huh?

HICKS: Do you want me to fire you NOW? Or after I.....

DALE: (BREAKING IN) Ah! That's more like it. So now I say: "You can't fire me! I quit!" And then you say....

HICKS: (INTERRUPTING WITH A ROAR) Where's that editorial I told you to write!?

DALE: What editorial?

HICKS: The editorial on the WPA?

DALE: (DISGUSTED) Aw, boss!

HICKS: Don't call me boss! My name's Hicks!

DALE: Well.....Mr. Hicks.....let James do your WPA editorial. I'd rather not.

HICKS: Would it bother you too much if I ask.....why?

DALE: Not at all! But are you sure you want to know?

HICKS: (SARCASTICALLY) Am I sure I want to know!? (PRETENDING
UTTER SWEETNESS) Dale, I'm as curious as an old maid.

DALE: (CHUCKLING) Well! When you grow up....I'll let you
write a nice, juicy gossip column.

HICKS: (ANGRILY) If you weren't one of the best newsmen I
know....I'd kick you out of this office on your ear!

DALE: Yeah? Don't forget they're grooming me for Joe Louis.

HICKS: (GROWLS WITH EXASPERATION) Dale! Quit trying to be
funny! This is serious!

DALE: (QUITE SERIOUS ABOUT IT) You bet your life it is! You
and your WPA editorial! What do you want to do?
Create a super-colobssal bread-line!?

HICKS: (CLEARS THROAT) Dale, how long have you been with this
paper?

DALE: Fifteen years.

HICKS: And how long have you and I been friends?

DALE: Almost twenty years, now.

HICKS: That's a pretty bit of time.

DALE: Yeah.

HICKS: Hummmmm. (CHUCKLES) But sometimes I wish I could dislike you.

DALE: (CHUCKLING) I know.

HICKS: Do you now! Well, stop taking advantage of our personal relationship!

DALE: I don't really mean to!

HICKS: Okay. Now let's get down to cases. (CLEARS THROAT) So, you don't want to write an editorial on WPA.

DALE: I didn't say I didn't.

HICKS: No?

DALE: No.

HICKS: Well?

DALE: All your editorials on WPA have been anti-WPA. I think you ought to look around and find one or two good points in the WPA set-up and do an editorial on its virtues for a change.

HICKS: Virtues! Has WPA any virtues?

DALE: Let's see. You live ten miles out of town.

(MORE)

DALE:(cont'd) What about that brand new road WPA built? Why don't you use the old road....the one WPA DIDN'T build?

HICKS: Well, I don't see....

DALE: (INTERRUPTING) Because that old road kicks a fit out of the springs on that high-priced gas-chariot you drive to the office every morning!

HICKS: So, I've got to....

DALE: (INTERRUPTING) And who built the airport you used last week when you flew to Washington? I'll tell you: WPA!

HICKS: And I'll tell YOU....the people are tired of all this Government spending!

DALE: Yeah? Well, they were tired of the sewer overflowing in front of this very building everytime it rained, too!

HICKS: I ran editorials on that for months! And....

DALE: But who built the nice, NEW sewer? Who fixed it so you can cross the street on rainy days without wading through water up to your knees?

HICKS: That sewer cost too much!

DALE: Yeah? If the City had built it....if would have cost plenty more! And you knowit!

HICKS: That's a matter of opinion.

DALE: Look, Hicks! You're running an independent paper here! You can afford to print the facts. All the facts!

HICKS: Who says I don't?

DALE: Well, when it comes to WPA you've lost perspective. Maybe, though, that's because you're tied down to a desk!

HICKS: That's an old gag....editor loses perspective because he's tied down to a desk! Get something new!

DALE: You get something new! A new angle on your pet peeve!

HICKS: (EXPLODING) I've had enough of this! Well, if you can't write....or won't write....a good, sizzling piece on WPA, I will!

DALE: (ANGRILY) That suits me fine! Since you're an old hand at the job....you'll turn out a better piece than I will!
(MUSIC SNEAKS IN) (GOING AWAY FAST) And when do I start looking for another job!?

HICKS: (SHOUTING) Maybe sooner than you think!

SOUND: (OFF MIKE) DOOR SLAMS.

MUSIC: SWELL BRIEFLY AND FADE FOR SCENE.

HICKS: (FADE IN) (ON THE POINT OF LOSING HIS TEMPER) What's the matter with you people this morning!

MISS HOLT: I'm sorry, Mr. Hicks.

HICKS: If I was dictating too fast why didn't you say so?!

MISS H: I merely missed the last part of it, Mr. Hicks.

SOUND: (OFF MIKE) (DOOR OPENS)

HICKS: Humph!

MISS H: Sorry, sir. But will you repeat it?

JAMES: (OFF MIKE) Story coming in over the wire services, Mr. Hicks. Jenkins wants to know.....

HICKS: (INTERRUPTING VICIOUSLY) Quiet!

JAMES: (SURPRISED) Well!

HICKS: Now, see if you can get it this time, Miss Holt!.

MISS H: Ready, sir.

HICKS: Saturated with waste, the WPA in all of its branches constitutes the most brazen evil ever to darken the pages of our country's glorious history. The WPA has done no good. It will do no good. We must rid ourselves of it. And immediately! (CHANGE OF TONE) Did you get that, Miss Holt?

MISS H: Yes, sir.

HICKS: Well, James? Can't Jenkins handle the City Desk out there?

JAMES: (OFF MIKE) Fire in Camden, New Jersey. Explosion and flames. Heavy loss of life.

HICKS: (GOING OFF MIKE) Sounds like it needs a special man on the spot. What's the matter with Jenkins!

SOUND: (OFF MIKE) DOOR SLAMS.

JAMES: (COMING TO MIKE) What's ailing Hicks today?

MISS H: Got tired of writing anti-WPA editorials himself and asked Dale to do it. Dale said WPA couldn't be as bad as the boss paints it once every week-- or something like that. There were words between the dear, old friends. Now Hicks needs the Pasteur treatment for hydrophobia.

JAMES: A muzzle will do.

MISS H: If it's made of iron! (CHANGE OF TONE) Did you catch the end of his last epistle to the people on saving the country from WPA?

JAMES: Yeah. We'll print it on asbestos.

MISS H: Of course, I just work here. And I don't know from nothing. But you get around. Is WPA as bad as our illustrious Managing Editor would have the subscribers think it is?

JAMES: Two sides to every issue, sister! Too bad, though, the boss is blind in one eye when it comes to WPA.

MISS H: Suppose Hicks could see out of both eyes? What would the picture look like?

JAMES: I'm like you, sister. I just work here.

MISS H: Hmmmnn. (CHANGE OF TONE) What's happening in Camden?

JAMES: The weather and the war weren't hot enough. So Camden's got to get itself a fire.

MISS H: A bad one, Huh?

HICKS: (OFF MIKE) Okay! Step in here, Dale.

JAMES: They're still ringing up alarms. Past count, now.

DALE: (OFF MIKE) Sure!

HICKS: (COMING TO MIKE) You got to Camden. But quick, see?!

D.ALE: Right!

HICKS: Pick up where the A.P. left off. Play ball with the local press. Get a wire through to us soon as you get to Camden. And keep it open!

D.ALE: This sounds as if you've got a special interest in this fire.

HICKS: Never mind that! (CHANGE OF TONE) Benny'll go along for pictures. (CLEARS THROAT) I'll take your calls in my office when you get on the spot. So give me a good story.

DALE: (SNIFERING) Give you a good story! What do you think I am? A cub on his first assignment?!

HICKS: Make sure you get names right. The dead, injured and so forth.

DALE: Say! What is this? I'm a reporter! You don't have to tell me my business!

HICKS: (FLYING INTO A RAGE) All right! All right! If you wan'na know I'll tell you! I've got a sister in Camden. Haven't seen her for years. Family quarrel and all that. Married a guy who worked in a factory. From the reports the A.P. is sending over its wires I think my sister may live in or near the vicinity of this fire!

DALE: Oh.

HICKS: (PAUSE FOR EFFECT) (QUIETLY) Blood's thicker than water, (MUSIC SNEAKS IN) Dale.

DALE: Yeah, I know.

HICKS: Keep your eyes open, will you? Her name is Mrs. Janice Binns.

DALE: (GOING OFF MIKE) I'll see all there is to see, boss.
So long!

MUSIC: SWELL BRIEFLY AND FADE FOR SCENE.

SOUND: TELEPHONE RINGING. (CUT SHORT)

HICKS: Yes? Oh, hello Dale. How's it going? (PAUSE) Pretty bad, huh? (PAUSE) Just a minute, Dale. (ASIDE) Miss Holt!

MISS H: Yes, sir.

HICKS: Get James. Tell him to come in here and take Dale on this Camden story.

MISS H: (GOING OFF MIKE) Yes, sir. Right away, Mr. Hicks.

HICKS: Hello? Dale? Listen, Jenkins has his hands full with war bulletins. (SOUND: OFF MIKE....DOOR OPENS & CLOSES)
I'm having James come into my office to do a re-write on the story. (PAUSE) Yeah. Now fire away! (PAUSE)
Yeah....yeah....yeah. Girl employee said she heard twenty-one explosions in rapid succession before the flames swept through the building. Yeah....yeah....
Employees showered with burning oil. Yeah. (PAUSE)
Did you get a line on my sister yet, Dale? (PAUSE)
(SOUND: OFF MIKE....DOOR OPENS & CLOSES) (SHOUTING)
But have you seen her, Dale? (PAUSE) Good Lord!

JAMES: (OFF MIKE) What's the matter, boss?

(MUSIC SNEAKS IN)

HICKS: My sister lived in one of the ten houses that went up in that blast in Camden!

MUSIC: SWELL BRIEFLY AND FADE FOR SCENE.

JAMES: (FADE IN) Take it easy, boss. Maybe Dale'll have a line on your sister next time he phones in.

SOUND: (AS LINE ABOVE IS SPOKEN) TELEPHONE RINGS. (CUT SHORT)

MISS H: That's probably Dale now.

HICKS: Hello? Yes, Dale! Shoot! (PAUSE) Several bodies have been brought out of the building. Yeah. Firemen fear a dozen or more dead may still be inside. (PAUSE) Yeah.... Yeah. (ANGRILY) Now wait a minute! No gags!

JAMES: Dale WILL DO his kidding!

HICKS: All right! I know you're a good reporter, Dale, but.... (PAUSE) You know how I feel about that! (PAUSE) I'll break your neck if you're....(PAUSE) All right! Hold the wire! (ASIDE) Miss Holt!

MISS H: Yes, sir?

HICKS: Get the composing room.

MISS H: Yes, sir!

HICKS: Tell 'em to kill that 'PA editorial!

MISS H: (SURPRISED) What?

HICKS: I said: Kill that WPA editorial.

MISS H: But, Mr. Hicks! This edition is already on the presses!

HICKS: I don't care! Kill that editorial!

MISS H: (GOING OFF MIKE) Just as you say, Mr. Hicks.

HICKS: Hello, Dale? Located my sister yet? (DOOR OPENS & CLOSSES) Well keep looking. And listen: I'm going to check on this tale you're spouting about the WPA in (MUSIC SNEAKS IN) Camden. Yeah! (PAUSE) How? You send or bring me an eye-witness! That's how! AND KEEP LOOKING FOR MY SISTER!

MUSIC: SWELL BRIEFLY & FADE FOR SCENE.

SOUND: (OFF MIKE) DOOR OPENS.

MISS H: (OFF MIKE) Dale's outside, Mr. Hicks. And he's got that eye-witness to the Camden fire you asked for.

HICKS: Well, it's about time! How long does it take to.....

DALE: (COMING TO MIKE) (INTERRUPTING) Hi-ya, boss!

HICKS: Well!

DALE: Got that eye-witness you wanted.

HICKS: It's about time you.... Yeah. Yeah, I see!

JANICE: (OFFMIKE) Hello, Fred.

HICKS: Sis, I..... Thought you said you couldn't find my sister, Dale! What th' Sam-hill you.....

DALE: (BREAKING IN HEATIDLY) Who do you think you are? There were five thousand other folks looking for lost relatives in Camden! I had to catch as catch could!

HICKS: Okay! Okay! (PAUSE) (QUIETLY) Long time no see, Janice.

JANICE: (OFF MIKE) Long time maybe you no want to see, Fred.

HICKS: Hmmm. Yeah, but..... Well, let's skip that now. We've another edition going to press in an hour.

DALE: He means give out with a first-hand story, lady.

HICKS: Yeah, Janice. That's the ticket. So make it pay off.

DALE: Tell him about the W.....

HICKS: (INTERRUPTING) You'll keep your trap out of this for the time being, Dale! (CHANGE OF TONE) Now, Janice..... what we want is human interest stuff. We've got the facts of the actual fire.... (MORE)

HICKS: (Cont'd)it's origin, property losses and all that.

But what about the injured, the dead, people thrown
out of their homes?

JANICE: Well, this fire's made quite a few people homeless,
Fred.

HICKS: Yeah, go on.

JANICE: There were hundreds of them. The Red Cross and the
National Guard moved in on the scene immediately.
Registration Headquarters for the homeless was set up
on a lawn.

HICKS: Hmmmnn. Yeah?

JANICE: A soup kitchen was set up. Meanwhile, the blaze was
growing and more homes were going up in smoke. The
Red Cross had its hands full.

HICKS: I'll bet.

JANICE: The local authorities just didn't know what to do. Then
the.....the WPA took over.

HICKS: How?

JANICE: Not just the Camden WPA. Its workers came from....from everywhere. From Newark, Paterson, Atlantic City. They came in trucks.....in anything on wheels.

HICKS: Yeah, to clutter up the place and add to the confusion.

DALE: She's telling the story! Suppose you listen!

HICKS: (ANGRILY) I'm listening! (CHANGE OF TONE) Go on,

Janice
~~DALE:~~

The WPA trucks were loaded with both men and women. Some of the women belonged to the Housekeeping Aid project. I'd heard they'd been trained to care for children and.....and distressed families. But to see those women go to work is to KNOW HOW WELL they're trained. Wherever the homeless were sheltered, they took over. They cooked. They cared for little babies, the sick, and the old.

HICKS:

Really!
~~No kidding.~~

JANICE: The WPA men loaded salvaged furniture on trucks and took it to Camden's convention hall where it can be claimed by its owners.

DALE: And that ain't all!

JANICE: No. That isn't all. Lots of poor families lost all they had in the fire. Even their clothing. And many won't be able to buy more. But the WPA Sewing Projects in Newark, Paterson, Camden and Atlantic City are taking good care of that.

DALE: Look, boss. Gimme a word here.

HICKS: Yeah?

DALE: To take care of these people in a hurry.....the women on the Sewing Projects are working over-time. And without pay, too!

HICKS: Yeah?

DALE: The remarkable thing is: they don't know and will probably never know the people who will benefit from their labor.

HICKS: Miss Holt! Take some notes.....while I think of it.....
for my next WPA editorial..

MISS H: Yes, sir! Ready!

HICKS: There are two sides to every issue. But we must look well to see both. In the past, it has been most difficult for the Editorial page of this paper to see good in WPA. However: that was before the Camden Fire. Even today, it is not by choice that we write in praise of this organization. Our admiration of WPA today is motivated by adherence to American ideals, one of which is good sportsmanship. Today, we are grateful for an organization like WPA. In the future tomorrows, we may learn how to express our gratitude. We shall learn quickly, too. For we should dislike to be without a WPA.